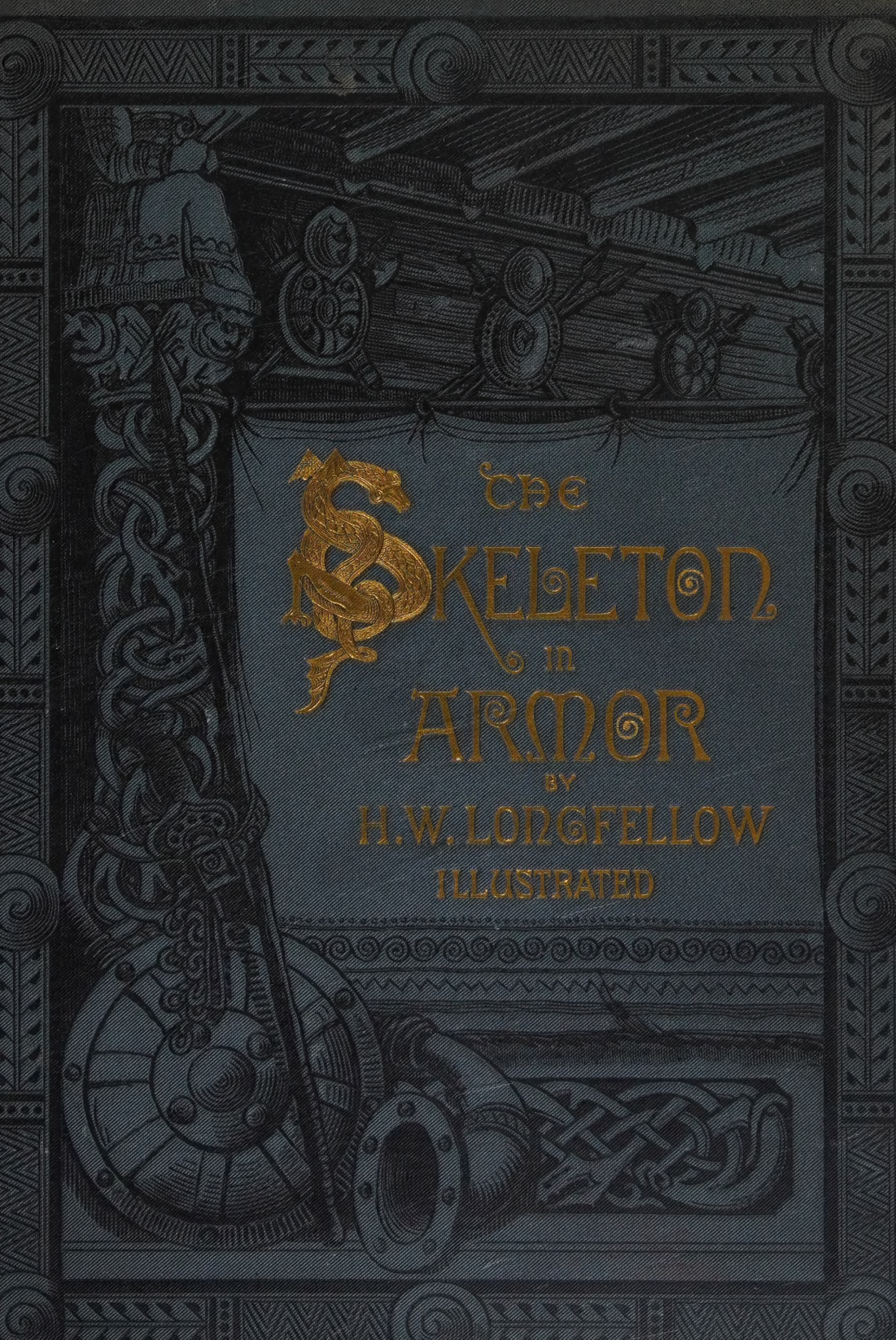
THE
SKELETON
IN
ARMOR
BY
H. W. LONGFELLOW
ILLUSTRATED

The Skeleton in Armor.

THE
SKELETON
IN
ARMOR
BY
HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BOSTON
JAMES R. OSGOOD & CO.
1877.

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By HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

List of Illustrations.

THE ENGRAVINGS ARE BY A. V. S. ANTHONY,

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	Artist.
Illuminated Title-page	L. S. Ipsen.
The Round Tower	E. A. Abbey.
"*I was a Viking old!*"	Mary A. Hallock.
"*By the wild Baltic's strand,* *I, with my childish hand,* *Tamed the gerfalcon*"	do.
"*Oft to his frozen lair* *Tracked I the grisly bear*"	do.
"*Many the souls that sped,* *Many the hearts that bled,* *By our stern orders*"	do.
"*Many a wassail-bout* *Wore the long Winter out*"	do.

" Once as I told in glee
Tales of the stormy sea,
Soft eyes did gaze on me" . . . MARY A. HALLOCK.

" I wooed the blue-eyed maid,
. . . .
And in the forest's shade
Our vows were plighted" . . . . do.

" Loud sang the minstrels all,
Chanting his glory" . . . . . do.

" While the brown ale he quaffed,
Loud then the champion laughed" . . . do.

" Should not the dove so white
Follow the sea-mew's flight?" . . . do.

" On the white sea-strand,
Waving his armed hand,
Saw we old Hildebrand,
With twenty horsemen" . . . . do.

" So that our foe we saw
Laugh as he hailed us" . . . . do.

" Mid-ships with iron keel
Struck we her ribs of steel" . . . . do.

" So toward the open main
. . . .
Bore I the maiden" . . . . . do.

" Cloud-like we saw the shore
Stretching to leeward" . . . . . do.

" Time dried the maiden's tears ;
She had forgot her fears,
She was a mother" . . . . . MARY A. HALLOCK.

" In the vast forest here,
Clad in my warlike gear,
Fell I upon my spear" . . . . . do.

[The emblematical border to the last stanza is drawn by MISS HALLOCK; the other borders and the vignettes and illustrated half-title are by L. S. IPSEN.

Introduction.

Introduction.

This Ballad was suggested to me while riding on the sea-shore at Newport. A year or two previous a skeleton had been dug up at Fall River, clad in broken and corroded armor; and the idea occurred to me of connecting it with the Round Tower at Newport, generally known hitherto as the Old Windmill, though now claimed by the Danes as a work of their early ancestors. Professor Rafn, in the *Mémoires de la Société Royale des Antiquaires du Nord*, for 1838–1839, says: —

"There is no mistaking in this instance the style in which the more ancient stone edifices of the North were constructed, — the style which belongs to the Roman or Ante-Gothic architecture, and which, especially after the time of Charlemagne, diffused itself from Italy over the whole of the West and North of Europe, where it continued to predominate until the close of the twelfth century, — that style which some authors have, from one of its most striking characteristics, called the round arch style, the same which in England is denominated Saxon and sometimes Norman architecture.

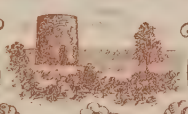
"On the ancient structure in Newport there are no ornaments remaining, which might possibly have served to guide us in assigning the probable date of its erection. That no vestige whatever is found of the pointed arch, nor any approximation to it, is indicative of an earlier rather than of a later period. From such characteristics as remain, however, we can scarcely form any other inference than one, in which I am persuaded that all who are familiar with Old-Northern architecture will concur, THAT THIS BUILDING WAS ERECTED AT A PERIOD DECIDEDLY NOT LATER THAN THE TWELFTH CENTURY. This remark applies, of course, to the original building only, and not to the alterations that it subsequently received; for there are several such alterations in the upper part of the building which cannot be mistaken, and which were most likely occasioned by its being adapted in modern times to various uses; for example, as the substructure of a windmill, and latterly as a hay magazine. To the same times may be referred the windows, the fireplace, and the apertures made above the columns. That this building could not have been erected for a windmill, is what an architect will easily discern."

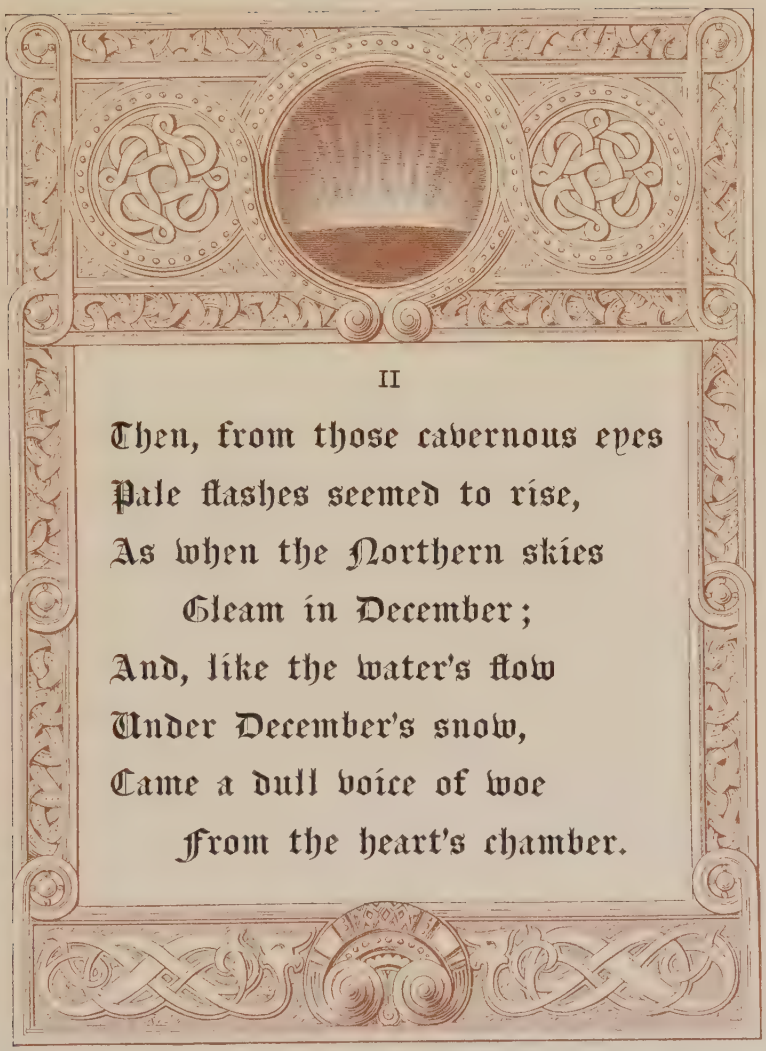
I will not enter into a discussion of the point. It is sufficiently well established for the purpose of a ballad; though doubtless many a citizen of Newport, who has passed his days within sight of the Round Tower, will be ready to exclaim, with Sancho: "God bless me! did I not warn you to have a care of what you were doing, for that it was nothing but a windmill; and nobody could mistake it, but one who had the like in his head."

THE SKELETON IN ARMOR

I

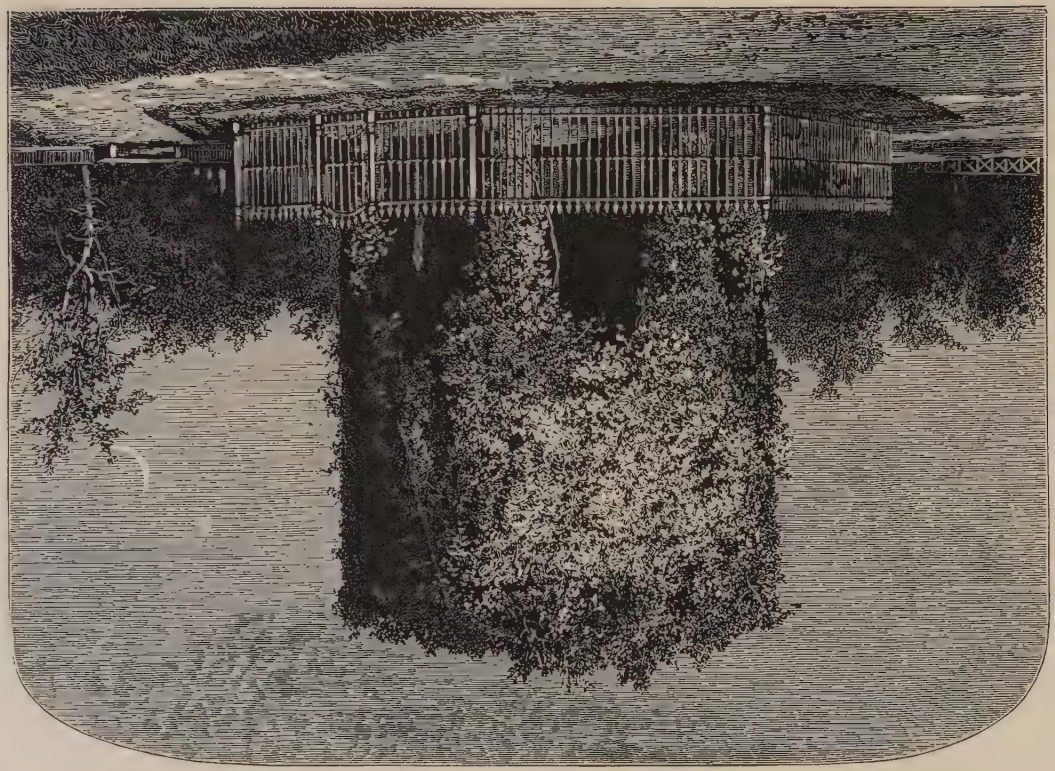
"Speak! speak! thou fear-
ful guest!
Who, with thy hollow breast
Still in rude armor drest,
Comest to daunt me!
Wrapt not in Eastern balms,
But with thy fleshless palms
Stretched, as if asking alms,
Why dost thou haunt
me?"

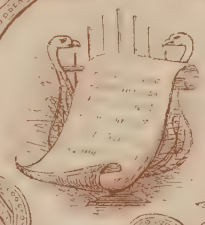




II

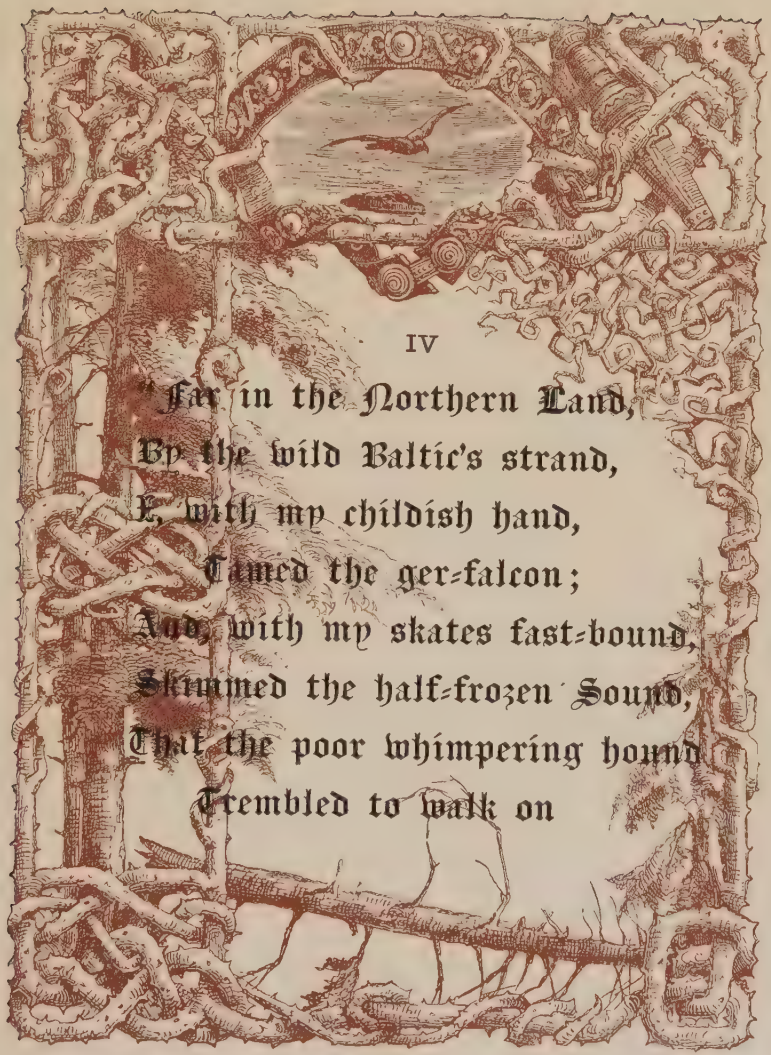
Then, from those cavernous eyes
Pale flashes seemed to rise,
As when the Northern skies
Gleam in December;
And, like the water's flow
Under December's snow,
Came a dull voice of woe
From the heart's chamber.





III

"I was a Viking old!
My deeds, though manifold,
No Skald in song has told,
No Saga taught thee!
Take heed, that in thy verse
Thou dost the tale rehearse,
Else dread a dead man's curse;
For this I sought thee.

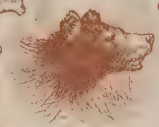


IV

"Far in the Northern Land,
By the wild Baltic's strand,
I, with my childish hand,
Tamed the ger-falcon;
And, with my skates fast-bound,
Skimmed the half-frozen Sound,
That the poor whimpering hound
Trembled to walk on

V

"Oft to his frozen lair
Tracked I the grisly bear,
While from my path the hare
Fled like a shadow;
Oft through the forest dark
Followed the were-wolf's bark,
Until the soaring lark
Sang from the meadow.

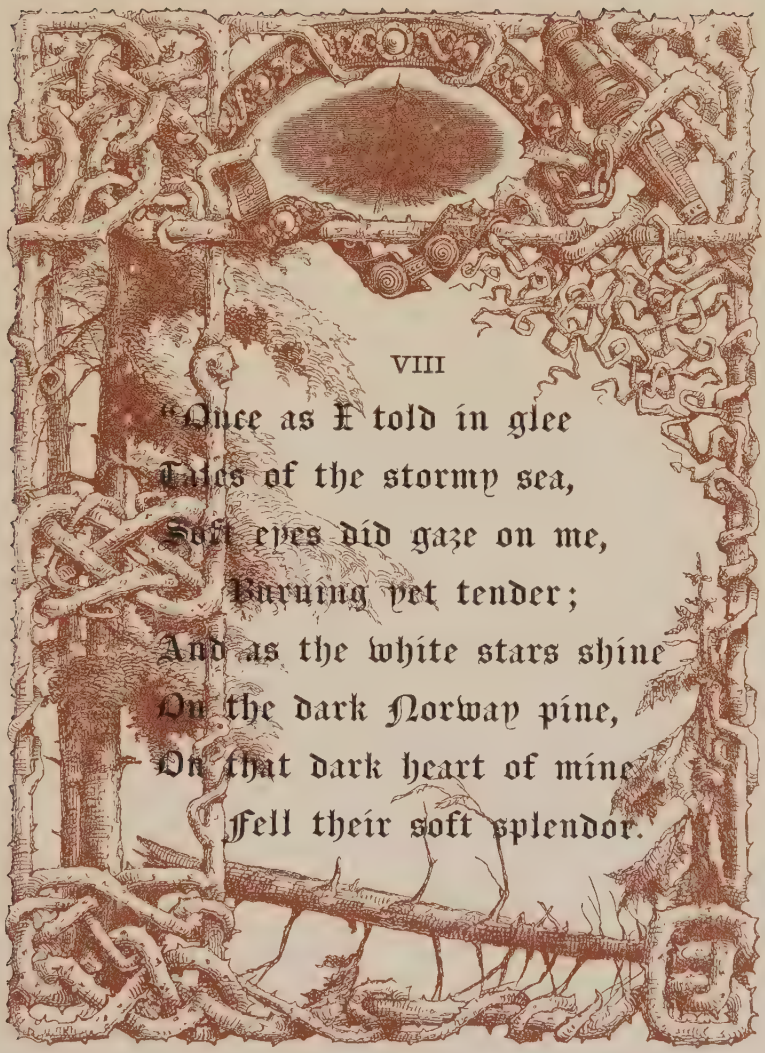


VI

"But when I older grew,
Joining a corsair's crew,
O'er the dark sea I flew
With the marauders.
Wild was the life we led;
Many the souls that sped,
Many the hearts that bled,
By our stern orders.

VII

"Many a wassail-bout
Wore the long Winter out;
Often our midnight shout
Set the cocks crowing,
As we the Berserk's tale
Measured in cups of ale,
Draining the oaken pail,
Filled to o'erflowing.

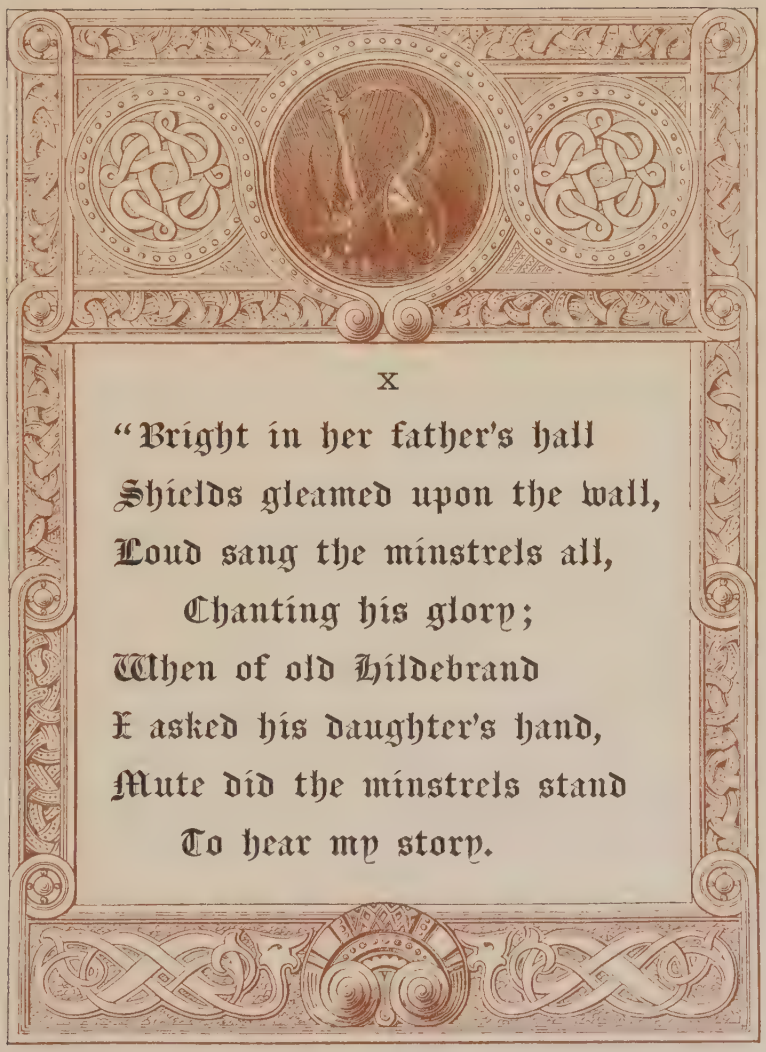


VIII

"Once as I told in glee
Tales of the stormy sea,
Soft eyes did gaze on me,
Burning yet tender;
And as the white stars shine
On the dark Norway pine,
On that dark heart of mine
Fell their soft splendor.

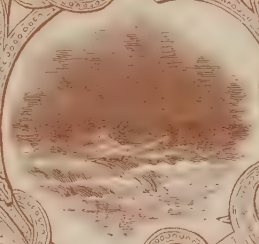
IX

"I wooed the blue-eyed maid,
Yielding, yet half afraid,
And in the forest's shade
Our vows were plighted.
Under its loosened vest
Fluttered her little breast,
Like birds within their nest
By the hawk frighted.



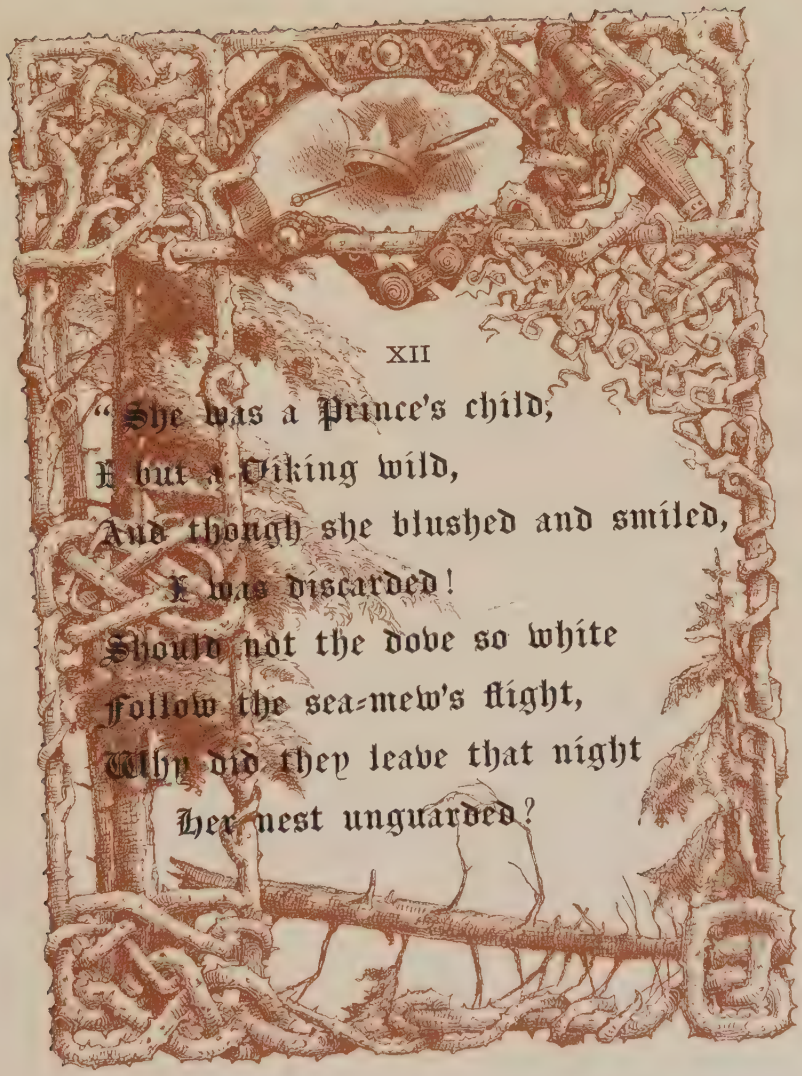
X

"Bright in her father's hall
Shields gleamed upon the wall,
Loud sang the minstrels all,
Chanting his glory;
When of old Hildebrand
I asked his daughter's hand,
Mute did the minstrels stand
To hear my story.



XI

"While the brown ale he quaffed,
Loud then the champion laughed,
And as the wind-gusts waft
The sea-foam brightly,
So the loud laugh of scorn,
Out of those lips unshorn,
From the deep drinking-horn
Blew the foam lightly.

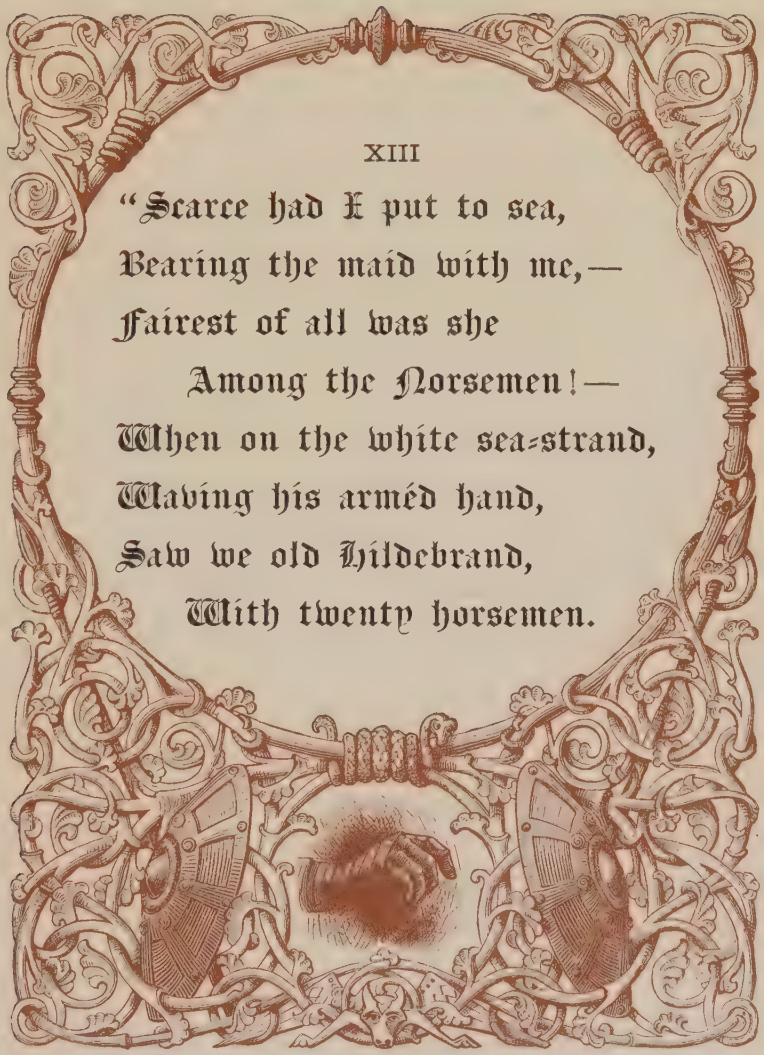


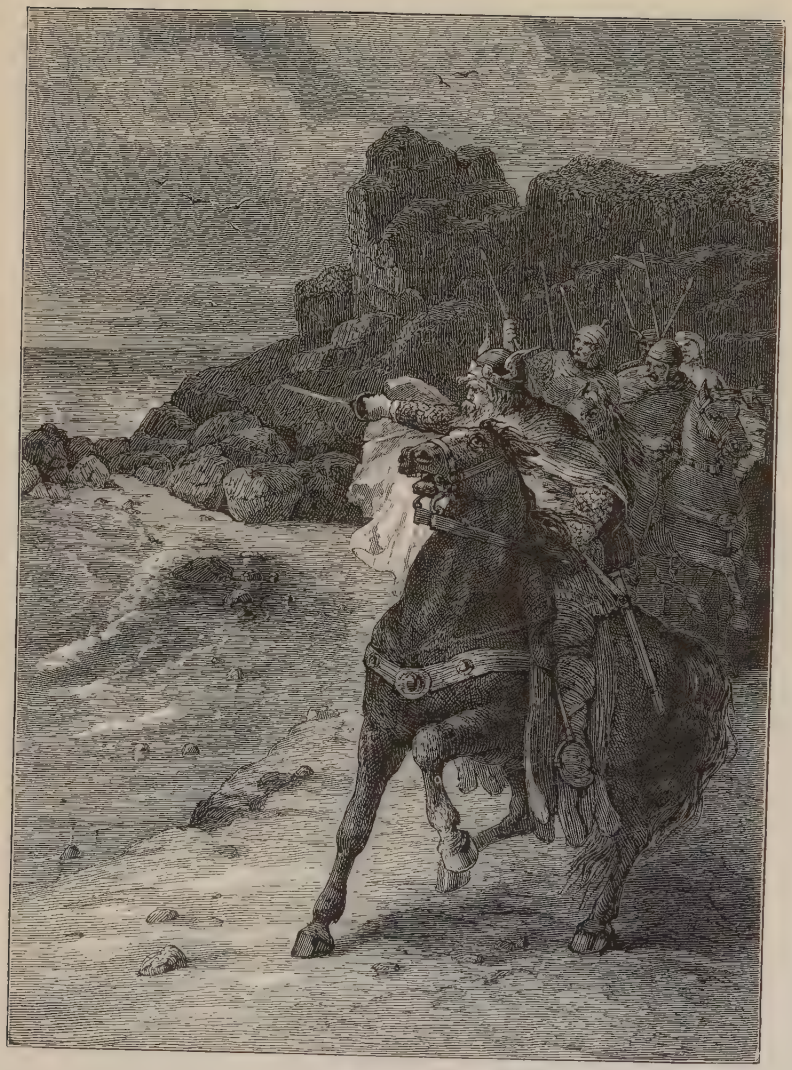
XII

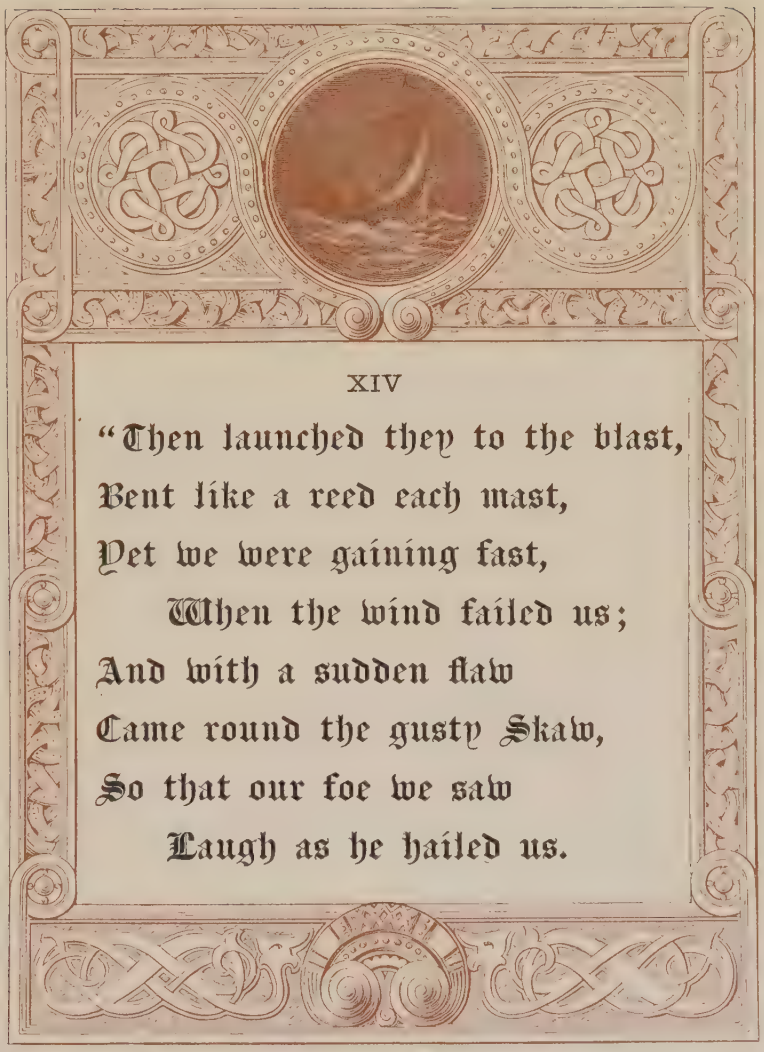
"She was a Prince's child,
I but a Viking wild,
And though she blushed and smiled,
I was discarded!
Should not the dove so white
Follow the sea-mew's flight,
Why did they leave that night
Her nest unguarded?

XIII

"Scarce had I put to sea,
Bearing the maid with me,—
Fairest of all was she
Among the Norsemen!—
When on the white sea-strand,
Waving his armèd hand,
Saw we old Hildebrand,
With twenty horsemen.

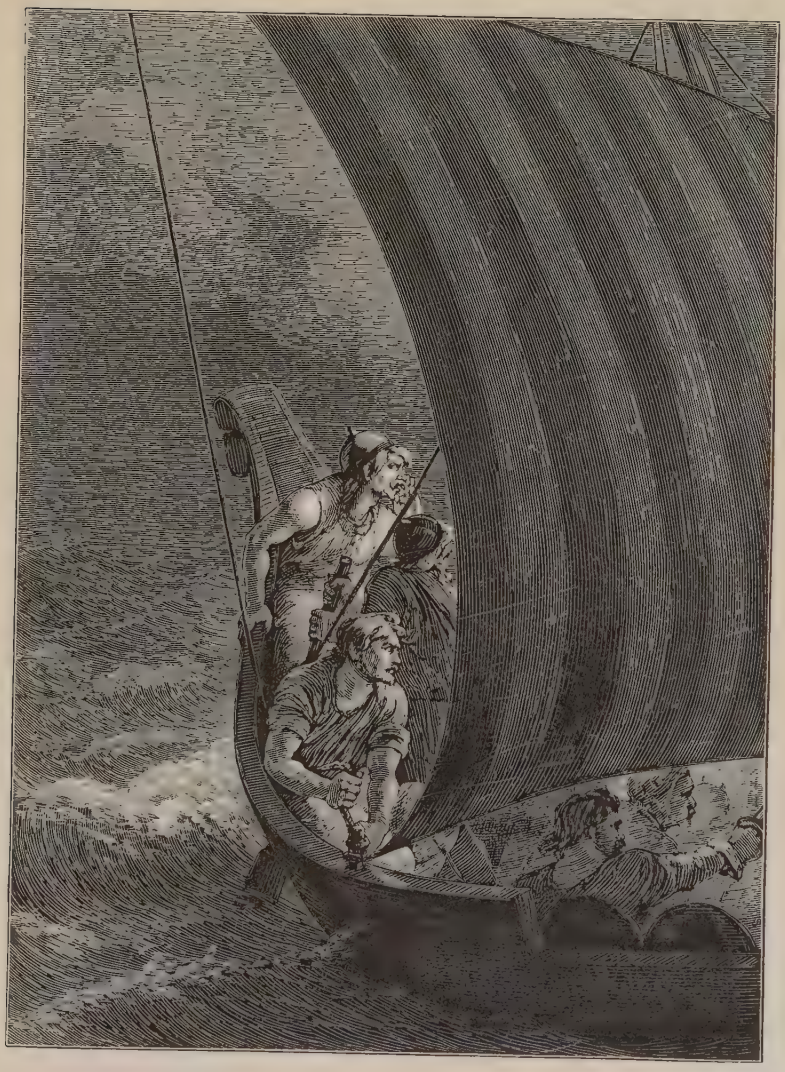






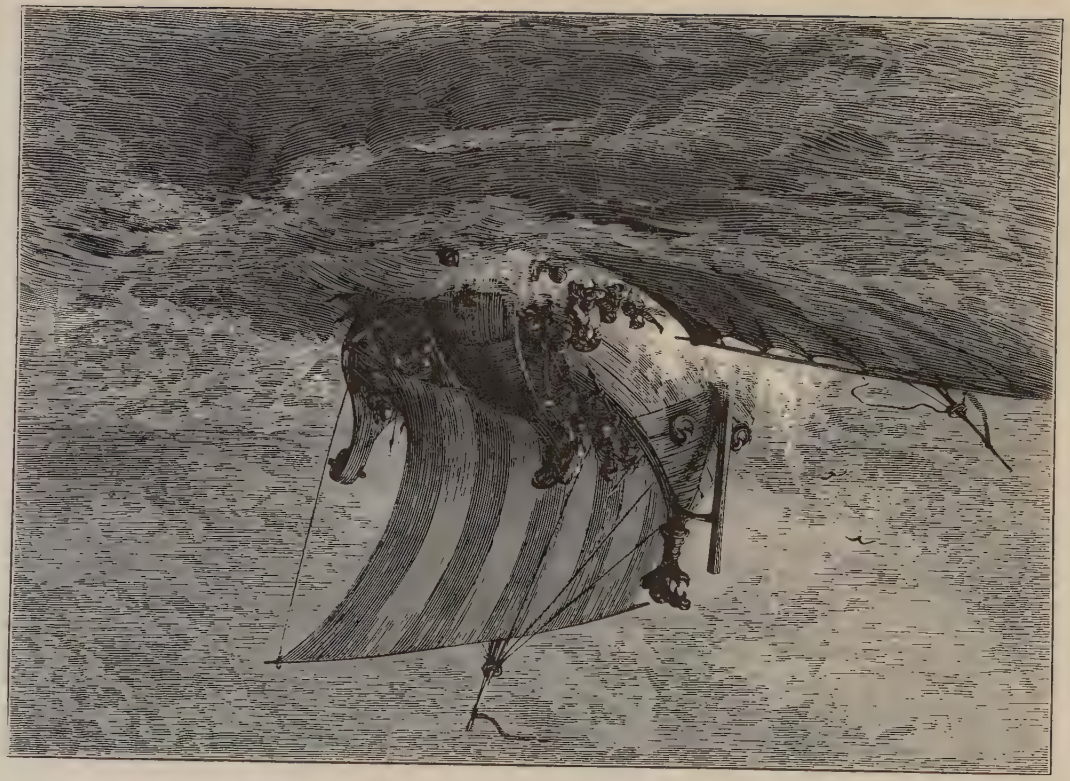
XIV

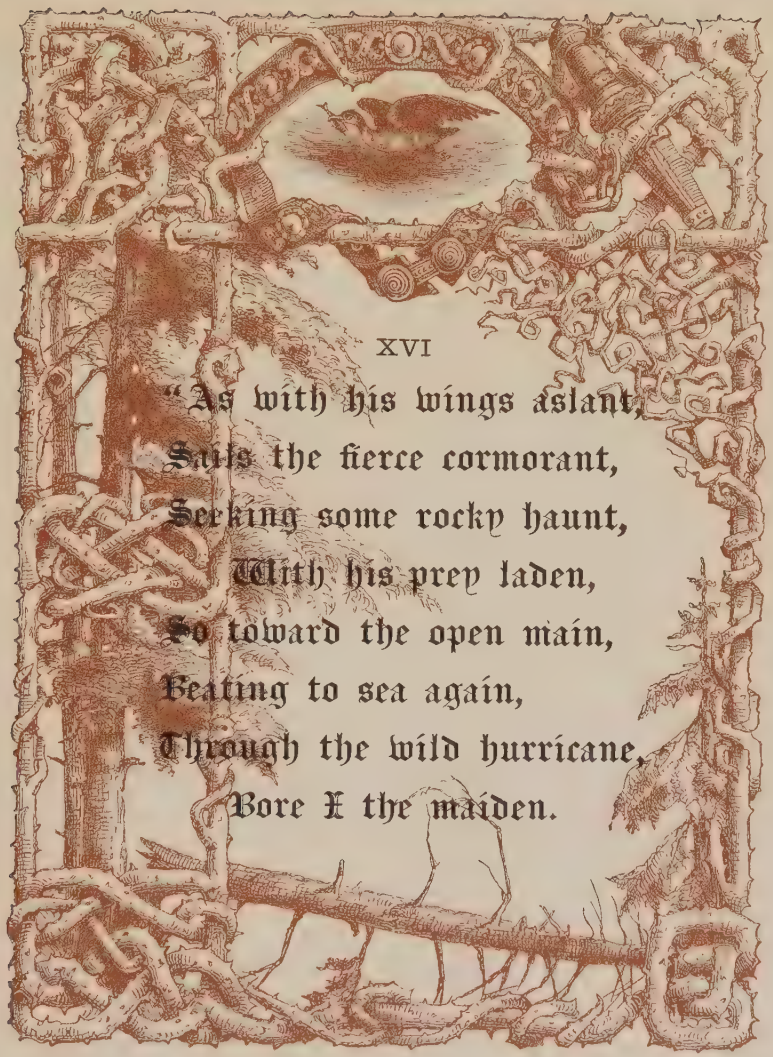
"Then launched they to the blast,
Bent like a reed each mast,
Yet we were gaining fast,
When the wind failed us;
And with a sudden flaw
Came round the gusty Skaw,
So that our foe we saw
Laugh as he hailed us.



XV

"And as to catch the gale
Round veered the flapping sail,
Death! was the helmsman's hail,
Death without quarter!
Mid-ships with iron keel
Struck we her ribs of steel;
Down her black hulk did reel
Through the black water!



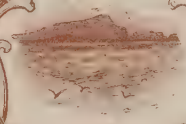


XVI

"As with his wings aslant,
Sails the fierce cormorant,
Seeking some rocky haunt,
With his prey laden,
So toward the open main,
Beating to sea again,
Through the wild hurricane,
Bore I the maiden.

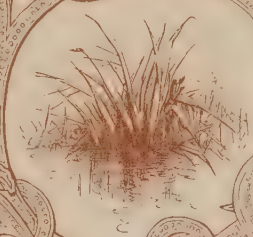
XVII

"Three weeks we westward bore,
And when the storm was o'er,
Cloud-like we saw the shore
Stretching to leeward;
There for my lady's bower
Built I the lofty tower,
Which, to this very hour,
Stands looking seaward.



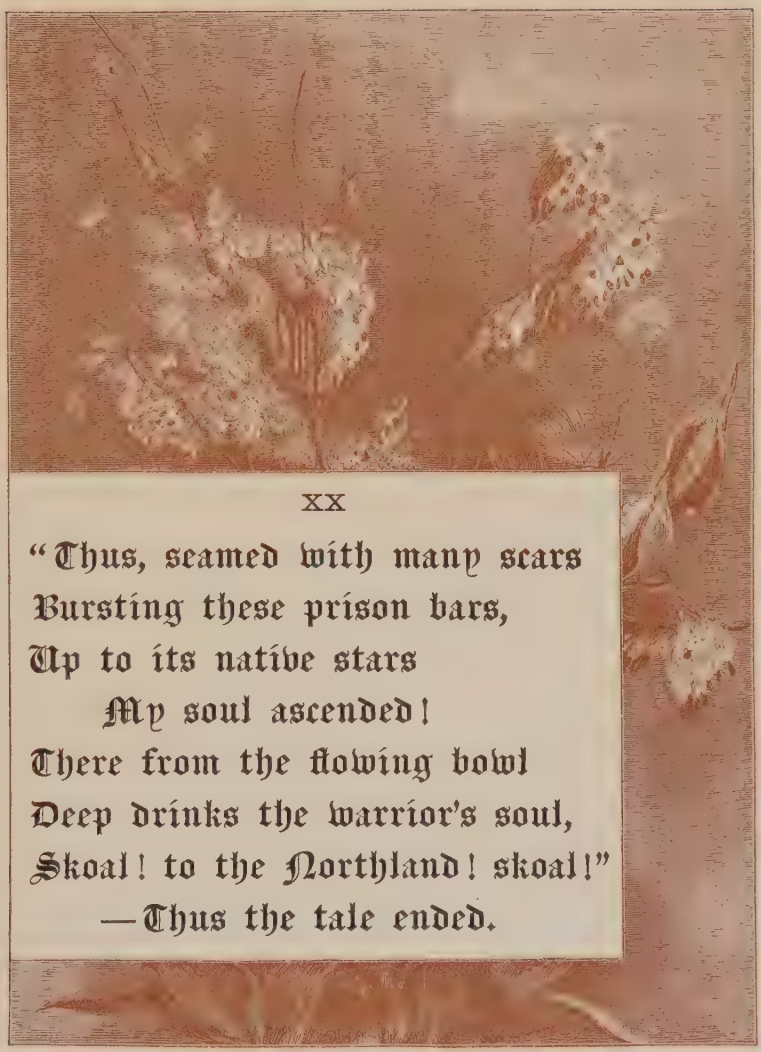
XVIII

"There lived we many years;
Time dried the maiden's tears;
She had forgot her fears,
She was a mother;
Death closed her mild blue eyes,
Under that tower she lies;
Ne'er shall the sun arise
On such another!



XIX

"Still grew my bosom then,
Still as a stagnant fen!
Hateful to me were men,
The sunlight hateful.
In the vast forest here,
Clad in my warlike gear,
Fell I upon my spear,
O, death was grateful!



XX

"Thus, seamed with many scars
Bursting these prison bars,
Up to its native stars
My soul ascended!
There from the flowing bowl
Deep drinks the warrior's soul,
Skoal! to the Northland! skoal!"
—Thus the tale ended.

Note.

Note

TO THE LAST STANZA.

Skoal!

In Scandinavia, this is the customary salutation when drinking a health. I have slightly changed the orthography of the word, in order to preserve the correct pronunciation.